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ABSTRACT

Questionnaires on tutor training workshops were distributed to volunteers working within 46 Canadian community-based (CB) or voluntary programs; 56 percent of the programs responded. The study explored the distinguishing features of CB and volunteer literacy programs, terms used interchangeably. Questionnaires were mailed to all provinces and territories with the exception of the Northwest Territories. Prince Edward Island was the only province that did not respond. Findings indicated that tutor trainers provided workshops that ranged in length from 3-33 hours. Respondents rated tutor training as a primary component in programming. The fundamental reasons for tutor training revolved around the necessity of providing students with knowledgeable, qualified tutors. Respondents used equally the terms "facilitator" and "tutor trainer" to describe the person who delivered training. Respondents were evenly split in their approach to designing workshops: top down or bottom up. Workshop evaluation ranged from informal to formal and formative to summative. Workshop content emphasized "practical" topics such as reading and writing strategies. Tutors' questions at workshops revolved around four themes: methodology, confidence, support, and progress. Respondents questioned the amount of learning that occurred and the relationship between training and practice. (Contains 48 references.) (YLB)

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From Coast to Coast: A Report on Tutor Training in Canada**Pat Campbell****1991**

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Pat Campbell
Toronto, November, 1991

Overview

This report aims to provide information about the training of volunteer tutors who are registered with literacy programs across Canada. Questionnaires on tutor training were distributed to 46 volunteer literacy and/or community-based programs. A total of 26 (56%) of the programs responded.

The report unfolds with a discussion of the terms community-based and volunteer literacy programs followed by a history of the volunteer literacy movement in Canada. The report concludes with the findings and summary of the tutor training questionnaire.

The impetus for this report came from personal experience in facilitating tutor training workshops at PROSPECTS Adult Literacy Association in Edmonton.

Community-Based Literacy Programs

A major purpose of this study was to provide information about the training of volunteer tutors across Canada. However, a question which arose from this study was what is *really* meant when a program is defined as either a community-based (CB) or as a volunteer literacy program? The study revealed a need to explore the distinguishing features of CB (community-based) and volunteer literacy programs as these terms were used interchangeably by the respondents. For example, in this study, it was difficult to discern between a community-based program in Yorkton, Saskatchewan and a volunteer literacy program in Calgary, Alberta as both programs shared similar philosophies, goals and approaches to literacy development.

James Draper (1991) stresses the importance of language in expressing a philosophy and states that "it is relatively easy to use current terminology such as learner-centred or community-based or self directed learning without really knowing the meaning of these terms or the implications of practising them."¹ In this statement, Draper questions whether literacy workers share the same meaning when they talk about their community-based programs. In order to engage in dialogue, practitioners across Canada need a deeper understanding of the meaning behind the terms community-based and volunteer literacy.

There seems to be agreement among practitioners who use the term volunteer literacy program; they train volunteer tutors to work on a one-to-one basis with adult students and promote literacy development. However, it should be noted that variance still exists in their ideology and methodology. There also seems to be a consensus among francophone literacy workers who use the term community-based; they "emphasize collective

¹ Draper, J. (1991). Understanding values in the workplace. In M.C. Taylor, G.R. Lewie, & J.A. Draper (Eds), Basic skills for the workplace. Toronto: Culture Concepts, p. 95.

participation in literacy activities and promote the social, cultural and economic development of the learner."² However, within the anglophone sector, the community-based means many things to many people.

Unfortunately, a survey of Canadian and American literature describing models of anglophone CB literacy programs serves to obfuscate rather than clarify the meaning behind the terminology. In Canada, Ontario's anglophone literacy workers have assumed a vanguard position in defining CB literacy programs.³ While CB literacy workers in other provinces were grappling with issues such as funding, professional development and public awareness, Ontario's literacy workers were attempting to provide a framework for understanding CB literacy.⁴ The Toronto Curriculum Working Group (1984) submitted a document to the Ontario Ministry of Education that provided a blueprint for urban CB literacy programs. This document stated that "a community-based literacy project is one in which members of a community share responsibility for providing basic education to local adults" (p. 1). The amorphous nature of this definition was refined in later years.

In March 1987, a group of 30 literacy workers from Metro Toronto, Ottawa, and Kingston met and produced the following prescription of a CB program. It was described as:

a program that was partially run by learners and incorporating a broad range of learning possibilities that would

² d'Entremont, C. (1990). The first step: Adult literacy, basic education and academic upgrading for acadians in Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia Department of Advanced Education and Job Training and the National Literacy Secretariat, p. 40.

³ The majority of the literature that defines community-based literacy programs has been published in Ontario.

⁴ See Campbell, P. (1991) for a historical perspective on the development of volunteer and community-based programs in Canada.

appeal to all the needs of adult learners; this program would be like a learning centre and would be accessible, informal, responsive and linked to the community with a membership that had a strong sense of ownership of the program⁵

This definition highlights salient characteristics of a CB literacy program. Firstly, learner-centredness means that students move beyond having an active role in the instructional process to being actively engaged in the management and governance of the program. The term 'partially' suggests that students should not have full ownership and control of the program and/or that they should only be responsible for specific aspects of the program. Secondly, the program is accountable to the community rather than to a formal institution. Thirdly, the program provides alternative instructional opportunities such as small group and one-to-one instruction. Unlike the francophone definition, this vision is framed within an educational, rather than a political perspective.

Gaber-Katz and Watson (1991) conducted a participatory study of three CB literacy programs in Ontario to "explore the emerging nature of community-based literacy practice and theory" (p. 2). The researchers named three fundamental elements which were significant to the development of CB literacy programs: (1) learner-centredness which enables students to define, shape and evaluate their goals and learning curriculum; (2) literacy from a critical perspective which is concerned with "social justice and with creating an education program that will question inequality and facilitate social change"⁶ and therefore, encourage students to think analytically about what they read and the world

⁵Atkinson, T. (1988), p. 52.

⁶Gaber-Katz & Watson (1991), p. 40.

around them; and finally (3) community-building which refers to collective action among people with common interests and concerns in building stronger communities.

Gaber-Katz and Watson acknowledge the contradictions between and among these three elements and identify 'political perspectives' as the principal contradiction. For instance, programs operating from a critical perspective place collective responsibility for social change at the forefront of their agenda whereas programs emphasizing learner-centredness primarily operate within an individualized educational frame. Programs that attempt to give these two elements equal weighting might experience difficulty in employing a critical perspective while still maintaining a learner-centred approach because the latter element's emphasis on the individual might deflect CB programs from their social vision.

In the United States, the Association for Community Based Education (ACBE) conducted a notable study aimed at identifying the unique characteristics and practices of CB approaches to literacy education. It developed six criteria or characteristics of the ideal CB literacy program based on the results of a previous study.⁷ The ACBE then conducted a survey of U.S. literacy programs which met these criteria and tested their assumptions. The ACBE concluded that a CB program is one containing the following characteristics:

- (1) It has a community orientation and serves a unified group of people, but not necessarily a geographic location.
- (2) It is independent and autonomous, and is not formally affiliated with other institutions.
- (3) It is successful in reaching and meeting the needs of underserved populations.
- (4) Its objectives focus on economic and social self-sufficiency and individual/community empowerment.

⁷Zachariadis, C. (1983).

- (5) It places a high priority on developing a learner-centred curriculum based on the student's objectives and needs.
- (6) It emphasizes a learner-centred methodology whereby students are active participants in the direction and control of their learning.
- (7) It emphasizes the whole individual and provides a variety of educational and support activities to help develop overall ability to function.

These characteristics stress service and methodology resulting in a depoliticalized vision that bypasses the collective goal of social and political empowerment. Instead, the goal of individual enrichment and growth is deeply embedded within this liberal vision placing the onus on the individual to change.

Fingeret (1984) argued that "the term community-based is problematic since it is also used to describe programs that may be individually oriented but are located in community settings" (p. 21). The ACBE's description of CB programs exemplifies Fingeret's argument. Therefore, rather than approaching CB programs as a *fait accompli*, Fingeret (1984) developed a framework that distinguished between community-oriented and individually-oriented literacy programs. Fingeret explained that although both types of programs may be concerned with empowering adults, the community-oriented programs were politicalized and "more likely to be advocates of social change, facilitating efforts of individuals to address broad community concerns and teaching literacy skills as necessary to assist the larger process of change" (p. 25).⁸ Individually-oriented literacy programs, on the other hand, "approach[ed] literacy from an individual standpoint, isolating literacy skill acquisition from other issues that clients may be facing and facilitating the movement of individuals into the larger society" (p. 24). I find Fingeret's framework the most useful for

⁸Alden (1982) uses the term 'critical perspective' to describe community-oriented programs.

understanding CB literacy programs because ideology, rather than methodology, is used as the primary distinguishing construct.

History

The National Scene

The seeds for Canada's volunteer literacy movement were planted in 1970, but did not take root until the late 1970s. The community colleges, libraries, and Lutheran Church played a key role in the development of volunteer literacy programs.

In 1976, World Literacy of Canada sponsored a report on adult basic education and literacy activities in Canada.⁹ One outcome of this report was the 1976 conference which assisted in the advocacy of the international volunteer literacy movement and served to bond the Laubach groups as people became aware of existing programs across Canada. By the early 1980s, the number of volunteer programs increased as a few provincial governments began funding pilot volunteer literacy projects.

On October 1, 1986, in the Speech from the Throne, the federal government pledged to "work with the provinces, the private sector and voluntary groups to ensure that Canadians have access to the literacy skills that are the prerequisite for participation in our advanced economy."¹⁰ Approximately one year later, newspapers of the Southam News chain published articles on adult illiteracy based on the findings of a literacy survey commissioned by Southam News.¹¹ These two events heightened the public awareness of adult literacy and had a tremendous impact on volunteer literacy programs in terms of accessing funding and recruiting tutors and students.

⁹Thomas, A.M. (1976). Adult basic education and literacy activities in Canada, 1975-76. World Literacy of Canada.

¹⁰ Crombie, D. (1988), Message, Learning, 5(1), p. 13.

¹¹ Calamai, P. (1988). Broken words. Ottawa: Southam Communications.

During the mid to late 1980s, volunteer programs continued to proliferate as provincial governments began to respond to public pressure and increased their support of adult literacy initiatives. Also the federal government's National Literacy Strategy, which was earmarked for pilot or demonstration projects, served to develop and extend the on-going activities of existing volunteer programs.

Increased funding and heightened awareness of adult literacy has served to change the face of adult literacy programs in the past decade. Programs are becoming more professional and are defining and refining their ideologies and methodologies. Professional organizations have also surfaced and are providing professional development, support and resources to the volunteer sector.

Today, the volunteer sector is a key figure in the delivery of adult basic education. According to a 1988 report by the Council of Ministers of Education, "voluntary organizations have provided approximately 30% of the total educational programming available for adults with less than a Grade 9 schooling."¹²

British Columbia

Volunteer programs are an integral part of literacy programming in British Columbia, although they are not the main providers. I-Care, an acronym for Individualized Community Adult Reading Education, was the first volunteer program to be established by a community college. In 1978, Douglas College secured funding for the piloting of I-Care from the Ministry of Education because the College realized its classes were not meeting the individual needs of beginning adult readers.¹³ I-Care was incorporated into the college's base funding structure in 1981 due to its success and the commitment of the college

¹² Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (1988). Adult illiteracy in Canada: Identifying and addressing the problem. Toronto: Author, p.8.

¹³ Correspondence from I-Care, Douglas College.

president and board. At the time, literacy resources were scarce; consequently, the College produced Between Us, a manual and workbook intended for use by volunteer tutors and students. Between Us was also circulated among Alberta's literacy programs when Carole Oliver, the author of this publication, moved to Edmonton, Alberta.

The late 1970s marked a period of growth for literacy programming. In 1977, a Continuing Education Special Projects System initiated by the Ministry's Continuing Education Division provided developmental funds to approximately 200 adult basic education projects within community and institutional settings.¹⁴ A portion of this funding was used to conduct needs assessments, which resulted in the establishment of volunteer literacy programs connected to college institutions. Incidentally, Between Us was one of the first projects to receive funding. As early as 1979, Audrey Thomas was facilitating tutor training workshops in Terrace, East Kootenays, and Kamloops. Today, the 25 volunteer programs are funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology and are also eligible for federal funding. These programs are either attached to colleges or operate autonomously as registered societies. There is hope for overall developments as the Provincial Literacy Advisory Committee's (PLAC) recommendations for expansion of existing community-based and college programs "were unanimously supported in the Legislature in May, 1990."¹⁵

¹⁴ Thomas, A.M. (1983). Adult illiteracy in Canada: A challenge. (Occasional Paper 42). Ottawa: Canadian Commission for UNESCO, p.71.

¹⁵ UNESCO, (1991). Canadian commission for Unesco's report on the future contributions to literacy in Canada. Draft report presented at Unesco's special meeting, September 11-13, 1991, p.29.

Alberta

Alberta's first volunteer literacy program, X-Terminators' Literacy Council, was established in 1977 and served the areas of Fort Vermilion and La Crete.¹⁶ The members of the Fort Vermilion chapter of the Voice of Alberta Native Women and community representatives on Advisory Committees to the Adult Education Centres in Fort Vermilion and La Crete recognized the need for adult upgrading and approached the local Further Education Council for support.

Between 1977 and 1980, The X-Terminators' Literacy Council was affiliated with Laubach Literacy Council and volunteers staffed the council and provided one-to-one instruction. By 1980, the Council received funding from Alberta Advanced Education, which enabled the Council to hire a coordinator and provide honorariums to the community tutors. The Council has evolved into the Reading and Writing Tutoring Project and is a permanent outreach program delivered by Fairview College.

In the last decade, the number of programs has increased to 78. Volunteer literacy programs are funded by Alberta Advanced Education, Community Programs Branch and sponsored by each community's Further Education Council.

Saskatchewan

Since 1976, the community colleges have been the primary agents for the delivery of adult basic education.¹⁷ They have identified needs within the community and initiated the majority of Saskatchewan's 14 volunteer literacy programs. As early as 1973, Prince Albert Regional College, subsequently Natonum Community College, offered tutorial

¹⁶ J. Snyder (personal communication, November 1, 1991)

¹⁷ Thomas, A.M. Adult illiteracy in Canada: A challenge. (Occasional Paper 42). Ottawa: Canadian Commission for UNESCO, p. 75.

sessions, along with class instruction in its drop-in learning centre which was located in one of the lower socioeconomic neighborhoods.¹⁸ Parkland Community College was the first college to develop a volunteer literacy program. However, it is interesting to note that Saskatchewan's oldest volunteer programs which are described below are not attached to a college.

Saskatchewan's first tutor training workshop was offered by the Regina Public Library. Such an interest in the volunteer model grew out of their Learning Centre, an initiative which began in November, 1973.¹⁹ After attending the 1976 International Literacy conference, Sarah Landy, Head of the library's Adult Services, became stimulated to enter the volunteer arena. Marianne Pearson, a reading specialist, was hired by the library in July 1976 and also realized the need for alternative programming. The Library examined two volunteer models, Literacy Volunteers of America (L.V.A.) and Laubach, and preferred the methodology of the former.²⁰ In May, 1977, the library became an associate of L.V.A. In September, 1977 an L.V.A. field representative travelled from Syracuse, New York to provide training for their first tutor training workshop.

READ Saskatoon, a registered charitable organization, also deserves mention as it was the first group to initiate a volunteer literacy tutoring program from a community-based movement involving community representation. In December, 1978, representatives from Saskatoon Region Community College, Saskatoon Public Library, Saskatoon Star Phoenix, University of Saskatchewan, Social Services, Community Aid, Lutheran Church

¹⁸ Hindle, J.K. (1990). Literacy learning in Saskatchewan: A review of adult literacy programs (1989). Regina: Faculty of Education, University of Regina.

¹⁹ Landy, S. (1974). The right to read: Regina public library accepts the challenge. Canadian Library Journal, Sept./Oct., 442-445.

²⁰ Waffle, J. (1985). Literacy volunteers at Regina public library. Literacy/Alphabetisation, 10(2), 12-13.

Women and Canada Manpower formed a steering committee to examine possible solutions to illiteracy in Saskatoon.²¹ This led to the development of READ Saskatoon in 1979.

Manitoba

Winnipeg Volunteer Reading Aides, a Laubach Reading Council, was Manitoba's first volunteer literacy program. It was initiated in 1978 by volunteers who were working at the International Centre.

In the early 1980s, the major deliverers of adult basic education were the province's three community colleges, the urban school divisions' continuing education department and a few volunteer literacy organizations. In 1984, community-based programming entered the arena with funding from the Adult and Continuing Education Branch under a program entitled the New Initiatives Program.²² The majority of the 20 to 25 community-based programs offer part-time classes or group instruction by paid instructors whereas only a few of the community-based programs operate under the volunteer tutor model. Training for adult literacy practitioners has been provided by provincial government staff since the mid-1980s.²³

Manitoba and the Northwest Territories share a similar stance towards the use of volunteers in the delivery of adult basic education. Manitoba has found that the volunteer tutor model "is not suitable for all communities, particularly remote communities experiencing high rates of unemployment [and] the disadvantages of using only volunteers have outnumbered the initial advantages."²⁴

²¹ S. Vicq (personal communication, October 1991)

²² Manitoba Education, Adult and Continuing Education (1988). Manitoba: Progress in literacy. Winnipeg: Government of Manitoba.

²³ Norton, M. (1991). Training literacy practitioners for community-based settings. In J.A. Draper, M.C. Taylor & S. Goldgrab (Eds.), Issues in adult literacy and basic education Canada (pp. 97-104). Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

²⁴ Manitoba Education, Adult and Continuing Education (1988). Manitoba: Progress in literacy. Winnipeg: Government of Manitoba, p. 2 and Appendix III.

Ontario

Historically, Ontario has offered a wide variety of literacy programming, due to its demographic and geographic size. Programs are sponsored by community colleges, school boards, libraries, private agencies and community-based programs.

In 1899, university students were recruited by Alfred Fitzpatrick, a Presbyterian minister, to work as volunteer teachers for the Reading Tent Association.²⁵ The Association created reading rooms in northern Ontario's mining and logging camps and the volunteers assisted the workers with reading, writing, mathematics and citizenship. One of the volunteers, bored with waiting for the men to finish their shifts, decided to work alongside the men as a logger. This was the impetus for a new model of education - the 'labourer-teacher.' By 1922, the Reading Tent Association formally became Frontier College.

One of the earliest urban community-based program began in September, 1969 in London when Freda MacDonald, a qualified teacher, responded to a radio station's public service announcement inviting a volunteer to assist two women with their reading.²⁶ By early 1970, Terri Porter joined the program as a tutor, along with four additional adult students. By 1972-73, the program concentrated on the expansion and quality of its tutor training and Mrs. MacDonald and Mrs. Porter travelled to Syracuse New York to observe tutor training workshops sponsored by Laubach Literacy Inc. and Literacy Volunteers of America Inc.

²⁵ Pearpoint, J.C. (1987). Frontier college: Literacy education since 1899. *Prospects*, 17(2), 93-102.

²⁶ Thomas, A. (1979). Canadian adult basic literacy resource kit. Toronto: The Movement for Canadian Literacy.

By 1977-78, volunteer literacy programs were springing up in Toronto, Ingersoll, St. Thomas, Strathroy, and Goderich. In 1978, the Movement for Canadian Literacy secured a grant from Wintario to fund a four day workshop on tutor training at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. By 1985, approximately 30 community-based programs were in operation. In September, 1986, the Government of Ontario created the Ontario Community Literacy Grants Program and this program now funds over 100 community-based programs.

Quebec

In 1979, all English School Boards became affiliated with the Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWP).²⁷ At the same time, English School Boards offering Adult Education programs identified the need for volunteer literacy programs. The School Boards, with support from the Quebec Literacy Working Group, turned to the United States for models of successful literacy programs. After examining Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy, the School Boards decided to become affiliated with the latter group. The first volunteer literacy program, RECLAIM, was established in Montreal in November, 1980.²⁸ Thelma Blinn, who was actively involved with Laubach Literacy in Nova Scotia, travelled to Montreal in November, 1980 to deliver the province's first tutor training workshop.

The thirteen literacy volunteer programs operate as literacy councils and are affiliated with Laubach Literacy of Canada. The councils are staffed by volunteers.

²⁷ A. Gauvin, (personal communication, November 12, 1991)

²⁸ R. Goldstein, (personal communication, October 24, 1991)

Nova Scotia

Two-thirds (21) of the adult literacy programs are literacy councils affiliated with Laubach Literacy of Canada Inc. The remaining one-third (10) are community-based programs, primarily situated within the Metro region. These councils are the province's key providers of literacy education.

Lunenburg County is the home of one of Canada's first volunteer programs. In 1970, the county's local Lutheran Church Women (LCW) wanted to undertake a social-action program.²⁹ Mrs. Irlavere Tubbe, a member of LCW, became aware of an American volunteer program which was being promoted by the national body of Lutheran Church Women. After Mrs. Tubbe found statistics which indicated there were 1,400 adults in the County who were reading below the grade 5 level, the wheels were set in motion to develop a program. Books were purchased by the Department of Education's Continuing Education Program, 22 volunteer tutors were recruited and Mrs Norma Brookhart, a master tutor trainer with Laubach came from Philadelphia to deliver the initial tutor training workshop.

Literacy councils grew rapidly throughout the province. In 1970, another tutor training session was conducted in Halifax. By 1976, there were six Laubach literacy councils and this number doubled by the fall of 1977.

New Brunswick

The province's first volunteer literacy council, READ Saint John, was established in 1976. Today, the province has seventeen anglophone literacy councils, all of which are associated with Laubach Literacy's provincial and national organizations. In New

²⁹ One-to-one literacy pilot project. (1970). Nova Scotia: Adult Education, 7(7), 1-2.

Brunswick, these councils are the only option for students who are at the beginning levels in their literacy development.³⁰

The literacy councils are entirely operated and staffed by volunteers. Therefore, full-time literacy coordinators from each of the province's nine community colleges assist the literacy councils with recruitment and training of tutors. Each council is eligible to apply for grants up to \$5,000.00 from the Department of Advanced Education and Training.

Prince Edward Island

Queens County Literacy Council, the oldest and largest council on the island, was established in 1981. There are a total of five councils which are entirely operated by volunteers, with no paid staff. The volunteers are trained by three certified trainers. The Councils are the main providers of literacy programming within the province and are associated with Laubach Literacy.

Yukon

In 1980, Project Northern Tutor, a native literacy project with paid tutors, was established in Dawson City with a grant from Canada Community Services Program (CEIC). The project closed a few months later due to lack of professional support.³¹

The Yukon Literacy Council, established in 1983, sponsors the volunteer literacy programs and provides tutor training to volunteers and some paid tutors. In 1984, the Council received funding from CEIC to establish Project Wordpower, which opened its doors in downtown Whitehorse on November 17, 1986 and tutor training began in 1987. By 1987, Shaktak Project Read was established in Haines Junction with funding from the

³⁰ Premier's Advisory Council on Literacy (1991). Framework for action, Fredericton, Policy Secretariat.

³¹ M.L. Fournier, (personal communication, November 5, 1991)

Federal Government and plans were underway to start another program in Watson Lake. The three programs receive their funding from the Department of Education, Advanced Education Branch.

In 1984, the Yukon Literacy Council produced a tutor handbook entitled A Northern Perspective.

Northwest Territories

With the exception of Fort Smith, which has been operating a volunteer program for two years, the volunteer literacy model has not been adopted by the Northwest Territories due to their socioeconomic situation.³² The relatively small-sized communities and lack of potential tutors contribute to the unfeasibility of implementing the volunteer model.

Since the early 1970s, the Northwest Territories has experienced success in establishing adult learning centres in 43 of its 61 communities. These sites provide programming in adult learning, cultural and communications. Adult students receive literacy instruction in small groups by a qualified instructor.

³² L. Fogwill, (telephone conversation, November 26, 1991)

The Present Study: The Training of Canada's Volunteer Literacy Tutors

The Procedure

The purpose of this study was to gather information on tutor training workshops designed for volunteers working within Canadian community-based or volunteer literacy programs. The study was conducted in the fall of 1991 and was restricted by time and funding, as it was part of an independent study for a doctoral program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Consequently, it was limited to anglophone literacy programs.

A covering letter and five page questionnaire designed to gather historical information and contacts was sent to administrators of provincial and territorial literacy organizations. In the absence of such organizations, the lead governmental departments were contacted. Each administrator was requested to identify five volunteer literacy programs which provided unique and innovative tutor training. All of the organizations and government departments responded to the questionnaire.

A nine page questionnaire on tutor training was designed and piloted at East End Literacy, Frontier College and East York Learning Experience. In September, the final version of the questionnaire and a covering letter were mailed to 46 volunteer literacy programs; these programs had been identified through the initial questionnaire.

During the development of these questionnaires, a decision was made to use the term volunteer literacy program, rather than community-based program as a descriptor for

programs which match volunteer tutors with adult students. However, each respondent was requested to state which term they used to identify their program.

The findings indicated that British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Nova Scotia employ both terms. However, in the latter province, the community-based programs were those which were not affiliated with Laubach Literacy. Ontario and Manitoba favored the term community-based. New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island used the term literacy council because their programs are affiliated with Laubach Literacy. The Yukon and Quebec preferred the term volunteer literacy program, even though the latter province is affiliated with Laubach Literacy.

The Respondents

A total of 46 tutor training questionnaires were mailed to volunteer literacy programs across Canada and 26 (56%) responded (see Table 1). Questionnaires were mailed to all of the provinces and territories with the exception of the Northwest Territories. Prince Edward Island was the only province which did not respond to the tutor training questionnaire.

Table 1

Locations and Number of Programs that Responded to the Tutor Training Questionnaire

Provinces and Territories	N
British Columbia	5
Nova Scotia	4
Alberta	4
Saskatchewan	3
Ontario	3
Manitoba	2
Quebec	2
Newfoundland	2
New Brunswick	1
Prince Edward Island	0
Yukon	0
Northwest Territories	0
TOTAL	26

All of the respondents were people who delivered tutor training to volunteer tutors, with three exceptions: one worked with paid tutors and two delivered Nova Scotia's Tutor and Instructor Certificate Program to volunteer tutors and paid literacy workers. The respondents' experience in facilitating tutor training workshops ranged from 1 to 13 years (see Table 2). Collectively, the respondents had 149 years of experience!

Table 2**Years of Experience as a Tutor Trainer**

Years	N
One	2
Two	3
Three	2
Four	3
Five	3
Six	4
Seven	2
Eight	2
Nine	0
Ten	3
Eleven	1
Thirteen	1

Length of Workshops

The tutor trainers provided workshops which ranged in length from 3 to 33 hours (see Table 3). On average, the tutors were provided with 12.5 hours of training. (The 33 hour workshop was excluded from the calculations as it is part of a certification program.) One trainer, whose program was not funded, was able to provide two hours of training per month. Another trainer, who worked with paid tutors, provided 50 hours of training along with an additional 42 hours per year for tutors wanting to obtain a certificate. These two programs were excluded from Table 3.

Table 3

Length of Tutor Training Workshops

Hours	N
Three	1
Six	1
Seven	1
Eight	1
Nine	1
Ten	4
Twelve	7
Eighteen	3
Twenty	2
Twenty-four	1
Thirty-three*	2

* The 33 hour workshop was offered by Nova Scotia's Tutor and Instructor Training and Certification Program.

The Findings

The Importance of Tutor Training

Tutor trainers rated the importance of tutor training within their program and provided a rationale for their ratings. The ratings ranged from #1 (extremely important) to #10 (not important). Eighty percent (80%) of the trainers rated training as being extremely important. Sixteen percent (16%) of the respondents rated training as #2 or #3, and only one respondent gave tutor training a rating of #8.

The respondents' rationale for rating tutor training as extremely important sharply contrasted with the media's slogan which purports "The only degree you need [for becoming a volunteer tutor] is a degree of caring".³³ The fundamental reasons for tutor training revolved around the necessity of providing students with knowledgeable, qualified tutors. First of all, trainers wanted the tutors to possess a clear understanding and acceptance of the programs' philosophy and values. Secondly, the trainers wanted the tutors to be familiar with adult learning principles. Thirdly, the trainers wanted the tutors to walk away with a knowledge of the reading/writing process and teaching strategies.

Some programs did not match the tutors with students prior to training. These programs viewed training workshops as an opportunity to "get to know the tutors." The underlying assumption was that a better understanding of the individual tutors would ultimately lead to better student-tutor matches. A few respondents even used the training as a screening device to determine if the "tutors will subscribe to the values we espouse."

³³ November 1986 ad from the Ad Council Coalition for Literacy in the United States.

People Who Deliver Tutor Training

The respondents were asked what term they used to describe a person who delivered tutor training. The terms 'facilitator' and 'tutor trainer' were equally used by the respondents. Those that employ the term 'tutor trainer' do so because it clearly describes the position and the task at hand. Facilitator is preferred by some because it "conjures up a more interactive approach" and mirrors the programs learner-centred philosophy. As a result and for the purpose of this report, the two terms will be used interchangeably. The terms 'coordinator' and 'presenter' were only used by five people because it described their position within the program.

Respondents were also asked whether their program required tutor trainers to possess a certain level of experience or skills. Three-quarters of the programs called for a certain level of expertise. Education (a post-secondary degree) and experience were almost equally weighted, however slightly more emphasis was placed on the latter. The programs required experience in either tutor training (certified tutor trainer), adult education, or the volunteer sector.

Tutor trainers were employed as paid full or part-time staff by the majority (83%) of programs. Programs which were operated by unpaid staff relied on volunteers to train tutors. The Governments of Manitoba and Nova Scotia supported programs by providing training for all volunteers. Approximately one-half of the programs also used experienced volunteers and students to facilitate a portion of the workshop. Some programs relied on guests or contracted tutor trainers to deliver specialized topics such as "computers in literacy" or "learning disabilities."

Volunteers and students performed varied roles in the development and facilitation of workshops. In order to share the ways in which volunteers and students participated in workshops, all of the respondents' comments are listed below.

The volunteers' role involved:

- *planning the agenda*
- *delivering a segment of the agenda*
- *participating in panel discussions and question/answer periods*
- *role-playing the reading/writing strategies*
- *sharing their concerns, frustrations and successes*
- *explaining the nature of the first tutorial session*
- *fostering a spirit of team-work and support*
- *registering tutors*
- *soliciting donations from local businesses to fund the workshop*

The students' role involved:

- *participating in panel discussions and question/answer periods*
- *reading their writing*
- *demythifying myths*
- *describing the characteristics of a good tutor*
- *discussing how the program works from their perspective*
- *addressing their needs, goals and frustrations*
- *talking about their lives and their experience in school*
- *working with new volunteers who are practicing a reading/writing strategy*

Developing and Evaluating Workshops

The respondents were evenly split in their approach to designing workshops: these approaches could be categorized as top-down or bottom-up. Those that depended on the top-down approach developed a workshop based on their experience in the field or on academic qualifications, and identified the topics to be covered. In the bottom-up approach, the facilitators continually consulted with experienced tutors and students to identify their needs and developed a workshop which would meet those needs.

Approximately one-half of the facilitators fine-tuned the workshop after every session. The remainder waited a year or two before making major changes to the workshop. Two principal reasons were given for constantly modifying the workshops. In the period between workshops, the facilitators were attending professional development sessions, reading articles and conferring with educators. Consequently, the workshop was modified in order to integrate the new information they learned from colleagues and professional development activities. Secondly, the facilitators consulted with the tutors after a workshop and integrated their suggestions into the next workshop. A few facilitators expressed a personal need to change the workshops in order to reduce boredom. One facilitator stated: "Changes also make a more effective, enthusiastic tutor trainer."

Workshop evaluation ranged from being informal to formal, and formative to summative. Approximately one-half of the facilitators relied on written questionnaires which were distributed to tutors at the end of a workshop session. In five cases, the workshop was evaluated by a member of the board of directors or a program supervisor. A few people (5) asked tutors in the field to reflect on their training by asking, "What do you think of training now that you're in the field?" One questionnaire even took this approach a step further by designing a questionnaire for experienced tutors which questioned the

validity or relevance of the training. Some facilitators talked with students to gain insights about the effectiveness of strategies being taught in the workshops. One respondent, when asked how the tutor training was evaluated, replied, "Oops, it isn't."

Workshop Content

The majority of respondents (83%) included an orientation, introductory or initial session in the tutor training. For most facilitators, the primary purpose of this orientation was to provide information about the program, its philosophy and its role in the community. Secondly, the orientation explored expectations from the viewpoint of the tutor and the program. Sometimes, the orientation served as a screening device to weed out inappropriate potential tutors. Thirdly, the orientation introduced literacy issues, teaching tips, and training methodology. In one case, the orientation was a chance for tutors to tour the facility.

The respondents' were requested to list the topics which were covered during the tutor training workshops (see Table 4). The greatest emphasis was placed on 'practical' topics such as reading and writing strategies. Only four people listed the reading process. Material development, lesson planning and adult learning principles were also frequently listed by the respondents. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents addressed the issue of literacy in a broad sociological perspective.

Table 4**Number of Programs Who Employed Specific Tutor Training Topics**

Topic	N
Reading Strategies	26
Writing Strategies	26
Material Availability and Development	15
Lesson Planning	12
Adult Learning Principles	8
The Issue/Politics of Literacy	7
Reading Process	5
Math	5
Student Progress	4
Life Skills	3
Case Studies	3
Program Philosophy	3
ESL Tutoring Techniques	2
Informal Assessments	2
Working with Groups	2
Speaking and Listening Skills	2
Code of Ethics	1
Learning Disabilities	1
Cultures	1
Values	1

The respondents used a combination of lecture, group work, video, role-playing and exercises to deliver and reinforce the content of the workshops. Group work emerged as the most popular activity. Only one person indicated the use of drama.

The questionnaire requested the respondents to list the top three questions most frequently asked by tutors attending a training workshop. The findings indicated that the tutors' questions revolved around four distinct themes: (1) methodology; (2) confidence;

(3) support; and (4) progress. The tutors' questions are a reflection of their needs and concerns.

The most dominant theme was methodology. The questions ranged from the global, "How do people learn to read?" to the specific, "Do you use phonics?". Another reoccurring question dealt with lesson planning; tutors want to know how to "put it all together" and "how to begin tutoring someone." The theme of progress also surfaced; tutors want to know how to identify or determine progress. The tutors questions also revealed a lack of confidence in their ability to teach. They wondered if they possessed the academic and personal traits to be a good tutor. The theme of support surfaced with questions such as "Will there be further training?" or "Where can I get help?". Overall, the questions were very focused and specific, and did not show a concern with the larger picture of illiteracy.

The Definition of a Trained Tutor

The respondents were asked, "When do you consider a tutor to be trained?" One-half of the respondents believed that training is an on-going process where the tutors are always growing and learning. They hoped that the training provided a base from which the tutors "can develop enough awareness to ask some of the key questions." Forty-one percent of the respondents gave a finite answer in that they considered a tutor to be trained after completing a workshop. However, they recognized that tutors continued to learn from their student and from attending in-services. The remainder felt tutors were trained when they expressed confidence or felt comfortable in their partnership.

Tutor Trainers' Expectations

The statement, "When the tutors complete their training, I want them to walk away with...." was posed to the tutor trainers. Their responses to this statement reflected the trainers' high expectations.

The strongest area of agreement was that trainers wanted the tutors to walk away with confidence in their ability to work with a student. One trainer provided a provocative response which relates to the notion of confidence: "(I want the tutors to be) relaxed so they will listen to their learner and not feel they have to control the situation." Many trainers hoped to strike a balance between developing the tutor's empathy, respect and sensitivity for the student and developing a knowledge-base of the reading/writing and learning process. Several trainers wanted tutors to leave the training with a commitment to the program and an understanding of its philosophy.

Innovative Features

The facilitators were requested to describe one or two unique or innovative features of their tutor training. These innovations were related to the following four themes:

- (1) the development and design of the workshop
- (2) the learning process
- (3) the delivery of the content
- (4) a practicum component

In some cases, the facilitators did not assume responsibility for designing the workshop agenda. Instead, the "group defines its own needs , [sets] the agenda, assumes responsibility for gathering resources." Another program "conducts needs assessments with tutors to help construct and design workshops." One program allowed the tutors to choose their level of training after the orientation and stated that "Training is divided into two levels: Level One emphasizes reading and Level Two emphasizes writing."

It became apparent that the facilitators are designing workshops which promote active learning. In other words, tutors are able to engage all of their senses through listening, observation, discussion and practice. In most cases, facilitators modelled a technique, and then provided an opportunity for the tutors to practice it. This was usually referred to as the

"hands on approach." One program uses a "process of modelling whereby tutors observe the (facilitator) using a particular teaching strategy while working with a group of learners." Some facilitators described a sensitization exercise whereby tutors experienced the reading process by reading a piece of text in a foreign language. One program "encourages the tutors to develop a working hypothesis of students in case studies."

Some programs viewed their workshop as innovative because a cross-section of people delivered the content. For instance, one program described a "learner panel whereby learners develop and answer questions on issues they think prospective tutors need to know."

Finally, two programs enriched their training by offering a practicum component "whereby the tutor has an opportunity to work with a student under supervision in a classroom setting." After completing the practicum, the tutors are matched with a student.

Limitations

Respondents provided information about the limitations, drawbacks and weaknesses of tutor training. The relationship between training and practice was a dominant theme. In many programs, the training occurred before the tutors were matched with a student. The participants felt that training would be more valuable if it contained a practicum component occurred after the tutors had worked with a student. If the tutors entered the training with some experience, there would be a greater opportunity to address the tutors' specific concerns and questions.

Some tutor trainers expressed anxiety about the heterogenous composition of the volunteers. They wondered how to meet the needs of all the tutors, who entered training with various levels of academic qualifications and experience. One respondent remarked on

the difficulty in training volunteers with teaching degrees because they "want to carry on as they do in school." In other words, people with teaching credentials may not be open to altering their views on teaching/learning.

Some programs had specific concerns related to their funding or geographic position. For instance, unfunded programs relied on volunteers to facilitate the training. Programs which served a wide geographical area experienced difficulty in motivating tutors to travel to a centralized location for training.

Finally, the tutor trainers stated that a major limitation of tutor training is the amount of information to be covered in a short period of time. They realized that tutor training was not an ideal learning situation and questioned how much learning actually occurred. Several tutor trainers described themselves as "providers" and "givers" of information, rather than agents in the process of learning. Perhaps the limited time frame of tutor training acts as a barrier to a more interactive learning situation.

Hopes for the Future

In the questionnaire, the trainers were provided with the opportunity to engage in vision planning. The questionnaire asked, "If you could change one aspect of your tutor training (without worrying about restraints such as time or funding), what would you change?"

The trainers resonated in their desire to provide additional training for their tutors. This does not really constitute a change in the type of training they are offering; rather, a wish to provide more of what they are offering. The trainers recognized the need to be providing weekly mini-workshops, evening and weekend workshops, additional in-services and

support group meetings. However, constraints such as funding and time prevented the trainers from implementing this 'change'.

A few trainers believed that tutors should be paid for attending the training sessions. Others would like to introduce a practicum component to their training, or at least have student-tutors matched prior to the training so that tutors could 'personalize' the training. Programs which served a large geographical area wanted the training to change from a centralized to a decentralized basis in order to provide easier access for the tutors. Finally, some trainers would like to change the delivery of the workshops to include experiential learning activities, group work, role-playing and videos.

Definitions of Literacy

Each respondent provided his/her program's definition of literacy. Thirty percent (30%) used the simplest definition which defines literacy as the ability to read and write to meet one's goals. Approximately one-half of the respondents supplied a functional definition which stressed the importance of being able to fully participate in the life of a community. The remaining seventeen percent (17%) defined literacy as a critical awareness of social reality which empowers and transforms individuals and their reality.

Summary of the Findings

There is a growing trend towards the professionalization of literacy tutors. For instance, the Government of Nova Scotia has developed a 33 hour certification course and graduates are granted a certificate of completion by the Nova Scotia Community College. Likewise, the Manitoba Literacy Office has created a certification program which offers three courses which range in length from 18 to 90 hours. The Manitoba Literacy Office hopes to eventually arrange university credit for their Level III course. In May, 1991, Ontario's Practitioner Training Special Interest Group (PTSIP) developed a proposal to set up a Council for Literacy Education, Assessment and Recognition (CLEAR). This latter body plans to develop and apply a "Framework for Literacy Practitioner Education".³⁴

The necessity of highly qualified tutors was also apparent in this study as respondents rated tutor training as a #1 component in programming. Despite the high priority given to tutor training and the recognition that training needs to be on-going, respondents identified a frustration in being unable to provide additional training because of time and funding constraints. This raises the question, "Given the constraints, how can a program fulfil the goal of providing additional tutor training?". Perhaps programs need to re-examine their goals and creatively strategize how to achieve them. For instance, a group of 'veteran' tutors and students may be interested in assuming new responsibilities such as delivering a workshop.

The majority of programs operate from a learner-centred philosophy, whereby the students have an active role in designing an individualized curricula which meets their needs and goals. The learner-centred philosophy needs to be expanded, as students and

³⁴ Rowland, C. (October, 1991). Practitioner Training Special Interest Group. Literacy on the move.

tutors often play a minor or passive role in the planning, delivery and evaluation of tutor training workshops. However, there seems to be a growing support and interest for student and tutor participation as one-half of the programs included tutors and/or students in the development and delivery of the workshops. If a program is truly learner-centred, the power in the program needs to be shared so that there is not a hierarchical relationship between the educator and the student. In other words, students need to be active participants in helping to define, create and maintain the program.

Overall, the students and tutors role in the delivery of the workshop was equitable in terms of risk-taking. However, in five programs, the students' role involved a greater risk as they were asked to share the stories of their life or schooling. This is an example of storytelling being employed uncritically in mixed groups and raises the question of the purpose of storytelling. A more equitable situation would be one in which both tutors and students shared their personal stories and examined them from a critical perspective. For instance, both parties could look "for patterns, and begin to understand the political, economic, social, and cultural contexts of illiteracy."³⁵

The common form of workshop evaluation was a questionnaire which was distributed to tutors at the conclusion of the workshop. When addressing limitations, some respondents questioned how much learning actually occurs. That is, do tutors apply the methodology and principles of adult learning which are presented in the workshops to the tutorials or do they ignore the training materials altogether and chose to "wing it" with alternative methods? ³⁶ Six respondents addressed the validity of their workshops by asking tutors in the field about the relevancy or validity of their previous training. Another way to evaluate the validity of training would be to hold a "recall" session whereby tutors

³⁵ Almeida, C. & Bamdt, D. (Eds.). (1990). What do statistics leave out? *The moment*, 4(2&3), p. 13.

³⁶ Hindle, J. (1989). Literacy learning in Saskatchewan: A review of adult literacy programs. Regina: University of Regina, Faculty of Education, p. 25.

could share their experiences and trainers could evaluate the course in the light of the real needs of volunteers.³⁷

The majority of literacy definitions were functional and concerned with having students develop the skills to fully participate in the life of the community. Does this not mean that "our practice of literacy becomes a tool to accommodate the learner to the very system that oppresses him/her and perpetuates illiteracy?"³⁸ Perhaps we should begin taking the next step by having students focus on consciousness-raising, critical awareness, and the pursuit of political and social change. For instance, if a student's goal is to learn how to fill out job application forms, a program operating from a functional perspective would teach the reading and writing skills necessary to complete such a task. However, a program operating from a critical perspective would take the next step by engaging students in a dialogue which questioned the high level of unemployment and the problems facing workers in Canada. Popular education techniques, such as role-playing, drawing, and songwriting could be utilized to maximize the learning.

Finally, this report revealed the need to develop a stronger working definition of the term community-based as this term is often used in conjunction with the term volunteer program. Rather than dichotomizing literacy programs which utilize volunteers, it would be more helpful if practitioners placed their programs along a continuum and asked the question, "Is this program focusing on the need to read, or on the needs of people who can't read?"³⁹

³⁷ ALBSU (1986). Supporting volunteers in adult literacy and basic skills. London: author.

³⁸ Almeida, C. (1986). Reflections on one-to-one. Literacy/Alphabetisation, 11(2), p. 25.

³⁹ Eggert, J.D. (1984). Concerns in establishing and maintaining a community based adult literacy project. Paper presented at the National Adult Literacy Conference. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 182 465), p. 4.

A Parting Comment

Thank-you to all the participants who provided encouragement and expressed an interest in the outcome of this report. This study is just a beginning. From coast to coast, the professionalization of volunteer tutors is gaining momentum. We need to develop a network to share our expertise, concerns and questions about tutor training.

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